

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, January 25, 1878, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. 57 West Cromwell Road road, South Kensington, January 25th., (1878). My dear Mrs. Bell:

I had intended to have written to you and not to Mamma about Alec's visit to the Queen, but, I couldn't help telling her of it first, and in the end the letter assumed such dimensions that I had not courage to write another, especially as you said Mamma sent you my letters.

We have had two letters from you lately one to Alec and enclosing drawings of Mr. Bell's design for a globe arrangement of Telephones, the last came the other day. You ask about Alec's trouble I spoke of to Mamma. It is not the pain in his right side that I am glad to say has not returned since his visit to Elgin, what I meant was an irruption on the skin. It case on last March, a year ago when he was no much worried and the Doctor said was caused by his nervous excitement, and is a little discharge from the ends of the nerves. It was all over his body, and though not painful was very irritating. It is very much better now, since last May it has been confined to a small part above his left knee, but now and then it gets? orse and appears on his arms. When we came here first he went to Dr. Erasmus Wilson the best doctor of Skin diseases here, Dr. Wilson was away busy ever Cleopatra's Needle, but his partner confirmed the Boston doctors opinion, and said if it did not go away in six months he feared it would always be troublesome. It is now over so much better now that we hope with care it may go in time.

Never mind about sending Alec's flannels. He can only near but the softest and finest, and he has bought some, so he will not need any more. He does not wear flannel drawers only a kind of knit cotton ones that are sufficiently warm, and not irritating. He got his cold principally from not wearing thick flannel shirts, he thought he could not, but he has now

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some that will do. Alec I think occasionally sends newspaper reports to his Uncle Edward, but not often, and he has not been able to write to him himself.

I know nothing of Mrs. McBurney's father-in-law, and do not believe Alec does. We only saw them for a short time. About my coffee set, you must do as you think best, we do not really need it, I only thought by sending it to us, he should have the pleasure of using it, and also avoid the heavy duty, we should otherwise have to pay. No duty will be charged for sending it here, and by using it here we can bring it back to America duty free. However I suppose you could use the set for us and the long journey via England be unnecessary.

Alec has been down to Paris and I am more glad and thankful than I can say that he has come home again, yesterday. It was horribly lonely without him, though I ought not to have felt so, My friend Miss True spent nearly every night with me, Cheater and Col. Reynolds each came once, Mr. and Mrs. Home came nearly every day for a little while, our kind friend Lady Jones has invited me to their house almost every day, I have been there twice to spend the day and have been out driving and to the Governor Gallery to see some drawings of Old Masters with her and several friends have called, so that not a day has been spent alone and yet I was lonely and the six days Alec was away seemed like a year. He will have to go again in a fortnight, but I don't believe I shall let him go alone. I am sure the worst Channel voyage could not do me any more harm than the state of nervousness I got into nearly every day. He has had an interview with the best Parisian Lawyers whom Mr. Roosevelt has employed to conduct a prosecution against a firm who are infringing Alec's patent. They said at first that the patent was not worth anything because it had been applied for too late but, Alec succeeded in convincing them that the case was not hopeless as they had thought and they will begin proceedings at once. Still it will take two years to prove whether the patent is valid or not, and the infringers will probably go on manufacturing, but the prosecution will deter others who were just about to begin to manufacture, and in two years Mr. Roosevelt will have time to establish himself and do a good business even if the patent fails. The French Government recognize Alec and that is a very great thing Mr. Roosevelt, who some time ago spent long months and large

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sums of money in the vain effort to get government permission to build private lines and to form a District Telegraph Co. in Paris, says Alec accomplished in half an hour what no one else could do, namely get McPerreet Under Minister of Telegraphs to offer to build at government expense any number of private lines for Telephones, and to give him every facility for trying the Telephone on all government lines. Mr. Roosevelt says it quite took his breath away. The government is going to erect a telephone line from Paris to Versailles 20 miles and at Alec's request, began the very next day to put up a line for Mr. Roosevelt. Alec called on M Leon Lay, Minister of Finance, and the Ministers of War and Navy. On Mr. Roosevelt's telling M. Leon Lay that the Empress Eugenic had requested Alec to show her the telephone he agreed with Mr. Roosevelt in thinking it would be well for Marshall MacMahon to see it first, and he will ask him to appoint a day. The announcement of the formation of the English Co. has been delayed by Alec's absence he is now in town busy with the lawyers and gentlemen.

I sent you the mouth pieces that you wrote about, they only came the day before they were sent. They went by post, I hope they will reach you all right.

Today is a beautiful bright day but cold and I dread having to go out. My little dog Plema does not like it any better than I do, and shivers whenever he leaves his place before the fire, but his dread of being left alone is oven greater and whenever I go up and down stairs he follows 4 me and shivering begs to be taken up and covered up warm. He is a nice little black thing. Lady Jones called the other day and finding me out asked if I had gone out quite alone, "O, No" Emma answered, "she has her little dog with her". As if the poor little thing was much protection.

I must say Goodbye now as I have some things I want to do before it is too late to go out.

With love to Mr. Bell and the Miss Symonds,

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Affectionately, Mabel.